

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13
/069 W

-----092042Z 112069 /41

R 091530Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1552
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 2430

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP
SUBJ: VISIT BY RABBI STEPHEN GOLDRICH

REF: (A) 76 STATE 147470, (B) 76 CAIRO 8382, (C) CAIRO 2320

1. RABBI STEPHEN GOLDRICH, WHO IS HERE AS A MEMBER OF A STUDY MISSION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR, FEBRUARY 8. EARLIER IN THE DAY THE AMBASSADOR HAD BRIEFED THE GROUP.

2. ADVERTING TO HIS INTEREST IN THE CONDITION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, RABBI GOLDRICH RELATED HE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH A LEADER OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY MR. IZCAKI (THIS IS THE SAME GENTLEMAN WITH WHOM WE HAVE ARRANGED MEETINGS FOR CODELS). BASED ON HIS TALKS WITH IZCAKI AND VISIT TO LOCAL SYNAGOGUES, THE RABBI CONCLUDED THAT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN EGYPT IS GENERALLY WELL TREATED. SOME OF ITS MEMBERS, THE RABBI NOTED, APPEAR TO BE VERY POOR. IZCAKI'S MAIN COMPLAINT HAD TO DO WITH SOME TORAH SCROLLS (THE RABBI MENTIONED THIRTY) WHICH GOE ALLEGEDLY SEIZED SOME TEN YEARS AGO. JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS EVER SINCE SOUGHT TO RECOVER THEM, PARTLY
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FOR WORSHIP PURPOSES, BUT ALSO TO SEND SOME TO THE US. IT HAS HAD NO SUCCESS TO DATE. RABBI GOLDRICH WONDERED IF THERE IS ANY WAY IN WHICH GOE COULD BE PERSUADED TO RETURN THE SCROLLS TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY.

3. AMBASSADOR SAID IT IS ALSO EMBASSY'S VIEW THAT JEWISH COMMUNITY IS GENERALLY WELL TREATED. THERE IS

NO EVIDENCE OF CONSCIOUS DISCRIMINATION, AND MEMBERS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY MAY FREQUENTLY BE SEEN RELAXEDLY SIPPING TEA ON GROPPY TERRACE JUST AS IN PAST YEARS. MOREOVER, WE HAVE REGULARLY BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGED MEETINGS BETWEEN VISITING CODELS AND IZCAKI. WE DO UNDERSTAND SOME OF YOUNG MEMBERS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY ARE RESTIVE, SINCE THEY ARE UNCERTAIN OF THEIR FUTURE. SEVERAL, AS RESULT OF CODEL INTERVENTIONS, HAVE OPTED TO IMMIGRATE TO THE US, AND GOE HAS NOT STOOD IN THEIR WAY.

4. SO FAR AS TORAH SCROLLS ARE CONCERNED, AMBASSADOR RECALLED THAT SEVERAL YEARS AGO RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER OF UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS IN NEW YORK VISITED EGYPT TO STUDY SOME OF OLD TORAH SCROLLS AND TO MICROFILM THEM. AT THE TIME RABBI SCHINDLER REQUESTED USE OF EMBASSY POUCH TO SEND SCROLLS TO US. WE HAD TO REFUSE THIS ON GROUNDS THAT EW COULD NOT USE THE DIPLOMATIC POUCH TO SEND OUT DOCUMENTS WHOSE EXPORT GOE HAS NOT CLEARED. MORE RECENTLY, CODEL WAXMAN HAD URGED GOE SET UP BETTER FACILITIES TO PERSERVE OLD SCROLLS. AMBASSADOR SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THESE ARE SAME SCROLLS TO WHICH IZCAKI REFERS. IF SO, THE RABBI SHOULD KNOW THAT GOE PERMISSION IS REQUIRED TO EXPORT ANYTHING OF AN ANTIQUARIAN NATURE AND THAT OF LATE SUCH PERMISSION HAS BEEN DIFFICULT TO GET.

5. RABBI GOLDRICH REITERATED HIS PRIMARY INTEREST IS TO TRY TO GET THE SCROLLS RETURNED TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOR PURPOSES OF WORSHIP. HE HAD MET WITH MINSTATE FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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CABINET AFFAIRS, ABERT BARSOUM, A COPT, AND WONDERED WHETHER THSUBJECT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH BARSOUM. AMBASSADOR URGED HIM TO DO SO, BUT ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE RABBI WRITE A LETTER TO PRIMIN SALEM INDICATING: (A) THE NATURE OF THE GROUP WITH WHICH HE IS VISITING, (B) HIS MEETINGS WITH JEWISH COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND GRATIFICATION AT COMMUNITY STATUS, AND (C) ALLUDE TO THE SEIZED SCROLLS AND URGE THEIR RETURN TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE CONTEXT OF GOE'S AVOWED DETERMINATION TO PERMIT FREEDOM OF WORSHIP. RABBI GOLDRICH LIKED THE IDEA AND INTENDS SENDING SUCH A LETTER FROM CLEVELAND, WITH COPIES TO NEA/EGY AND TO THE EMBASSY. AMBASSADOR ALSO INDICTED THAT, IF FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF, HE WOULD SAY A WORKD TO THE PRIMIN TO ENDORSE REQUEST. THE RABBI EXPRESSED APPRECIATION.

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE SINCE BEEN ABLE TO LOOK FURTHER INTO THE MATTER OF THE SCROLLS. WHILE THE NUMBER OF ALLGEGEDLY SEIZED SCROLLS IS NOT THE SAME, THE SEIZURE

STORY IS VERY SIMILAR TO THE SCROLLS ABOUT WHICH RABBI
SAUL WOLF AND AHI EZER YESHIVA IN BROOKLYN WROTE TO
FORMER SENATOR BUDCLEY IN SEPTMBER 1974 AND ABOUT
WHICH BUCKLEY COMMUNICATED WITH DEPT. RABBI WOLF ALSO
COMMUNICATED WITH AMCONGEN ALEXANDRIA ON THE MATTER. AT THE TIME
CONGEN ALEXANDRIA, AFTER LOOK IN TO MATTER, WROTE
RABBI WOLF IN FEBRUARY , 1975, THAT SCROLLS HAD
BEEN SEIZED IN 1966 WHEN THEY WERE BEING SHIPPED THROUGH
CAIRO AIRPORT WITH OUT PERMISSION. JEWISH COMMUNITY'S
EFFORTS TO GET THEM RELEASED SEEM TO HAVE BEEN STYMIED.
THERE IS OBVIOUS GOE CONCERN THAT THEY WILL BE SMUGGLED
OUT OF THE COUNTRY. IF JEWISH COMMUNITY COULD GIVE GOE
SOME ASSURANCES THAT THIS WILL NOT BE THE CASE, AT LEAST
NOT WITHOUT PERMISSION, GOE MIGHT BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO
THE IDEA OF RLEASING THEM.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: JEWS, COMMUNITY RELATIONS, MEETINGS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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